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Ceballos Coordinates Summer Research Program for Area Students

Summary: Area high school students will work with Michael Ceballos on summer research projects.

(July 29, 2013)-Michael Ceballos, assistant professor of biology, has received a Project SEED award from the American Chemical Society (ACS), which provides funding for two area-high-school students to work on summer research projects with University science and math faculty members. Ceballos will act as SEED coordinator. Participating faculty members include Associate Professors of Chemistry Joe Alia, Jennifer Goodnough, and Ted Pappenfus.

Since 1968, Project SEED has provided students who historically lack exposure to scientific careers the chance to spend eight weeks conducting hands-on research and to receive guidance on career and personal development. Ceballos became involved with Project SEED as a mentor at the University of Montana six years ago. After coming to teach at Morris last fall, he approached ACS about making the campus a SEED site.

Ceballos's affinity for Project SEED stems from its flexible nature and encouragement of diversity in the lab. He believes that the program enables "students who may not have otherwise had these opportunities" to participate in academic research at a relatively young age. He adds that the projects also teach students to collaborate while encountering the realities of working in a lab environment.

"Learning how to think like a scientist is really important for us as a society," says Ceballos. "These projects teach us what science is really like: learning perseverance, hard work, dealing with adversity. Ultimately, if students stick with it and produce good data sets, they can present at national science conferences or even co-author a peer-reviewed article." He knows these experiences can help high school students build the skill sets they need to be highly competitive.

Ceballos worked with Morris Area High School (MAHS) Principal Craig Peterson '99 to identify students who could benefit from the program and meet ACS's stringent eligibility requirements. The two were able to recruit two qualified participants: MAHS students Calley Hickman and Natalia Batchenkova. Batchenkova, who was born in Russia, hopes to someday study biochemistry at Stanford University. She believes this research experience will strengthen her college applications and help her decide on a future career path.

"This is a great program that exposes students to scientific research," says Batchenkova. "I really appreciate having the opportunity to do hands-on research that will make me competitive when I apply for college."

Project SEED activities began in June and will run through late August. For more information, contact Ceballos at rceballo@morris.umn.edu.

Natalia Batchenkova, a participant in the ACS Project SEED program at Morris.
Above: Batchenkova and Ceballos at work in the lab.

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